



VASCO DA GAMA AND THE AGE OF PORTUGUESE EXPANSION

An Exhibition at the John Carter Brown Library



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This exhibition of books, maps, and images from the John Carter Brown Library collection commemorates Vasco da Gama's arrival in Calicut, India in May, 1498.



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VASCO DA GAMA AND THE AGE OF PORTUGUESE EXPANSION

IN THE HISTORY OF exploration, no change has been so conspicuous as the sudden extension within a single generation after 1492 of the range of European navigation to encompass the entire girth of the globe. The avenue of access to remoter oceans was the wind system of the South Atlantic. Until it was explored, the Indian and Pacific Oceans could not be approached by ships from Europe. The discovery of the sub-equatorial wind system was made by Bartolomeu Dias in 1487, when he met the South Atlantic westerlies that took him around the Cape of Good Hope. This encouraged successors to make ever wider sweeps into the South Atlantic. The results included the huge arc described by Vasco da Gama on his way to the Indian Ocean in 1497 and the Portuguese landfall in Brazil by Cabral in 1500.

In the course of the sixteenth century, from Brazil to west Africa and eastward as far as Nagasaki in Japan and the Spice Islands of the Moluccas, the Portuguese established a presence with their enclaves, forts, and fortified trading posts. But the Portuguese encountered seas of very different natures in the east and the west. The East India trade in gold, gems, and spices was controlled by a sophisticated and well-developed network of indigenous traders, and while the Portuguese operation made a great deal of difference to the Atlantic world, bringing that primitive arena of exchange into touch with the world's richest commerce, it had relatively little impact on the states and trades of Asia, most of which continued to grow, undisturbed.

Brazil was different. Here, there was no established long-range trading network, and resources had to be identified before they could produce wealth. Brazil was of interest at first chiefly as a way station on the voyage to the Indian Ocean via the South Atlantic wind system. Contemporary writings hardly mention more about Brazil than the events surrounding Cabral's landing on Easter day; the Portuguese voyages to the North—to Newfoundland and Labrador—received even less notice.



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I. Down the Coast of Africa: In Search of Gold and Prester John

India was already the objective when European exploration of the Atlantic began. In 1291, an expedition from Genoa departed “for the regions of India by way of the Ocean.” The practical difficulties, however, appeared insuperable and merchants continued to frequent the laborious traditional routes: the “Mongol Road” to the silk roads of central Asia (while they remained open); overland to the Persian Gulf; or via the Nile and caravan to the Red Sea. Meanwhile, for most of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, exploration in the African Atlantic focused on the search for the sources of the Saharan gold trade. The Portuguese tradition of long-range navigation grew out of this context. A deep-sea apprenticeship was gradually acquired in the course of return voyages from west African coasts from the 1430s onwards, when the Azores were developed as way-stations for ships that made wide detours into the North Atlantic in search of winds to take them home.

The Explorers’ World Picture

Before Vasco da Gama’s discoveries, Ptolemy’s Geography was the most influential of all the ancient texts that informed the Portuguese image of the unfrequented world. Rediscovered early in the fifteenth century and transmitted to Portugal not later than 1439, Ptolemy’s work on the geography of the world explained how to make a map on a grid of meridians and lines of latitude. Like this example, based on a version made in Rome in 1480, world maps derived from Ptolemy’s descriptions showed a landlocked Indian Ocean. European merchants knew the ocean well at first hand—travelling to it usually by way of a complicated route via the Nile and the Red Sea—but their navigations within it followed the monsoonal trade routes and no one knew for certain whether it was accessible around the southern tip of Africa. Vasco da Gama’s voyage was therefore preceded by intelligence-gathering missions to India, Arabia, and Ethiopia in the early 1490s, probably with the intention of clarifying this point.

- Claudio Ptolemy. World map. Rome, ca. 1480. (Restrike) Rome, ca. 1590.

Dom Henrique “the Navigator”

The glorious reputation which Prince Henry “The Navigator” (1394-1460) created for himself has been considerably revised. Modern scholarship presents a more complex picture of a man preoccupied with religion, astrology, honor, chastity, and his own authority, with limited intellectual interests and a modest geographical education. His self-image, however, was of a hero of chivalric romance, and his ambition was to be king—or at least to enjoy a kingly estate. His vast, expensive, and unruly assortment of “knights” and “squires” was maintained at first by piracy and, increasingly in the 1430s, by a long and unsuccessful campaign to conquer a kingdom in the Canary Islands. From the 1440s, slaving on the African coast became Henry’s main enterprise. The image of a disinterested, scientific patron of explorers originated as a propaganda-piece, dominating the portrait tradition and informing the depiction of the beneficent sage shown here.

- Joseph François Lafitau. *Histoire des découvertes et conquêtes des Portugais dans le Nouveau Monde*. Paris, 1733-34.

Island Settlements

The story of the expanding Portuguese world begins with the rediscovery and settlement of small islands in the northern and eastern Atlantic — the Canaries, Madeira and Porto Santo, and the Azores — settlements that became more important as the Portuguese realized how essential they were as provisioning stations on the routes to and from west Africa. Colonization of Madeira began around the year 1425, that of the Azores in the late 1430s.

- Benedetto Bordone. *Isolario di Bededetto Bordone nel qualsi ragiona di tutte l’isole del mondo*. Venice, 1534.

The Islands of Madeira, Cape Verde, and the Azores Described

Cordeyro, a Jesuit and a native of the Azorean island of Terceira, chronicled the discovery and settlement of the Atlantic islands of Madeira, the Azores, and Cape Verde. He also included a misleading account of the introduction of sugar cane from Sicily to Madeira, which he attributed to the initiative of Dom Henrique and which transformed the island into a laboratory for plantation economy large-scale

sugar production. Within a few years large quantities of high-grade sugar were being produced there, but the colonists rapidly destroyed the forests, and the island ran out of fuel. The sugar industry was transplanted to São Tomé and, from there, eventually reached Brazil.

- Antonio Cordeyro. *Historia insulana das ilhas a Portugal sugeytas no oceano occidental*. Lisbon, 1717.

Saõ Tomé Settled by Children?

By the early 1470s, the Portuguese had found the equatorial island of São Tomé in the Gulf of Guinea off the African coast, but the climate proved to be extremely unwholesome for Europeans and settlement was slow. Garcia de Resende, the official chronicler of King João II (1481-1495), reports on one of the methods used to populate the island. In 1492 the King allowed Jewish refugees (who had been expelled from Spain) to settle in Portugal upon payment of an enormous ransom. In 1493, those who could not pay had their children taken from them, baptized by force, and deported to São Tomé to help populate the island. The isles of the Gulf of Guinea were settled with criminal exiles and some Jews, but the chronicler's story of the children is not supported by surviving documents.

- Garcia de Resende. *Chronica dos valerosos e insignes feitos del rey don João II. de gloriosa memoria*. Lisbon, 1622.

"To See and Hear New Things"

Portuguese beginnings in exploration and colonization relied on imported Italian finance and savoir-faire. Alvise da Mosto, who followed careers as a maritime administrator and ambassador in his native Venice, was one of Dom Henrique's recruits. He took part in voyages to the Gambia and the Cape Verde Islands in the 1450s and left one of the most vivid and ethnographically well-informed accounts of travel in the period. He was one of the first disinterested scientific observers of sub-Saharan Africa, "desirous," as he said, "to see and hear new things." His work is also remarkable for its sexual candor. On these pages, he describes one of his conversations with the Wolof chief, Budomel, who asked for advice on how to improve his sexual performance.

- Alvise da Cà da Mosto. *De Aloysii Cadamusti Itineribus ad Terras Incognitas*. Venice, 1515.

Galvão and the Legend of Machim

Antonio Galvão was notable for two achievements: first, his promotion of an apostolate in the east that reached far beyond the limits of the mid-sixteenth-century Portuguese empire and trade networks; and, second, his world history of exploration, displayed here in a copy of the first edition. Among the curiosities it revealed or diffused was the story of the supposed discovery of Madeira by the English exile, Robert Machim, “with an abducted woman,” dated by this author to around 1344. The story is incredible, but it discloses two important facts about early Portuguese exploration—the participation of foreigners in the vanguard, and the inspiration of late medieval chivalric romances, from which the tale of Machim was certainly derived.

- Antonio Galvão. *Tratado...dos diversos & desuayrados caminhos*. Lisbon, 1563.

Portugal and Kongo: The Start of a Special Relationship

Portuguese monopoly of navigation along most of the west African coast was justified by virtue of papal bulls conferring a right of conquest, on the understanding that the primary Portuguese objective was the conversion of the inhabitants. In most places this obligation was virtually ignored, but in Kongo, from the 1480s, an extraordinary success-story unfolded. Here, the ruling dynasty and most of the elite eagerly adopted Christianity; native clergy were ordained; a royal palace in Portuguese style was built; Portuguese technicians and soldiers helped provide the kingdom’s needs; and it became customary for leading members of society to visit Portugal. This process began with a round of baptisms in 1491. The scene of the first baptism of a Congolese chief and his son, as depicted here, is based on an historical account by Edoardo Lopes, Portuguese ambassador to Kongo in 1578. As well as scenes of evangelization and celebration of mass, the engraver shows, in the right background, the departure into the interior of a force of Portuguese soldiers whose help in suppressing a rebellion was negotiated by another neophyte, the King of Kongo, João I.

- “Die erste Figur von Ankunfft der Portugaleser in die Landtschafft Cogno [sic]” In: Theodor De Bry. *Petits Voyages*. Part 1, German. Frankfurt, 1597.

Portuguese Slavers

In the time of Dom Henrique, the economics of Portuguese exploration relied almost exclusively on slaving. In the 1440s, raiding was more significant as a source of slaves than trading. Dom Henrique's official propagandist, the chronicler Zurara, represented the raids as chivalric cavalcades. In an alternative tradition, represented by this Dutch engraving of the early eighteenth century, the emphasis was instead on the brutality and criminality of Portuguese methods—man-hunting with dogs and unlawful seizure of free men. The scene is laid among the Azanaga (the usual victims of the Portuguese in this period) on the coast north of the River Senegal. The engraver, however, has borrowed the conventions of “native” dress from the traditional representations of Brazilian Indians.

- Pieter van der Aa. *Naaueurige versameling der gedenk-waardigste zee en land-reysen*. Leiden, 1707. Vol. 1

The West Coast of Africa Described

This sixteenth-century portolan chart depicts the West African coast from Cape Verde to the Cape of Good Hope revealed by Portuguese voyages of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Portuguese flags and a representation of the trading stronghold São Jorge da Mina on the Gold Coast east of the River Pra announce possession. Not much is known about Hercules o Doria, who drew this atlas in Marseilles in 1592, other than that he was allegedly the son of an Irish chartmaker.

- Hercules o Doria. [Portolan atlas.] Marseilles, 1592. Manuscript.

II. Tools of Empire:

The Art and Science of Navigation

By the end of the sixteenth century, European navigation consisted of two fairly distinct arts, pilotage and oceanic navigation. Pilotage depended primarily on experience and observation of terrestrial objects. Oceanic navigation, on the other hand, was fundamentally scientific and depended on calculation and the observation of celestial bodies. A pilot's ability was measured by the skill with which he guided a ship in coastal waters—his knowledge of soundings, tides, and shoals. The same skill was demanded of the navigator and, over and above this, the ability to direct the ship's course and fix the ship's position when far from land by observation of heavenly bodies and, in some cases, mathematical calculation. These skills developed as a result of experience and experimentation.

The first Portuguese West African voyages were essentially voyages of pilotage, coastal passages made by craft that examined the shores by day and anchored at night. But once lengthy runs had to be made out of sight of land (at first to avoid contrary winds and currents) and new lands had to be located and mapped, something more was needed than the ancient practices of dead-reckoning. Portugal shared something of the European scientific culture and the rich heritage of Judeo-Arabic mathematical and cosmographical learning. From the time of Prince Henry, the ruling house employed specialists, and under the crown's direction their skills solved urgent problems. In the Portugal of the early sixteenth century, the art of navigation had become one of the most advanced sciences, occupying astronomers, cosmographers, mathematicians, and instrument-makers.

Scientific Foundation for Navigation and Chartmaking

This work has been called “one of the ablest and most original navigational treatises of its century,” in which the practice of navigation and cartography entered the realm of exact science. Pedro Nunes was of Jewish ancestry. Although he lived in times of merciless persecution of “New Christians,” he was appointed Cosmographer Royal and given a royal pension. (However, he was asked to live in Coimbra, far

away from the court.) One of Nunes's many remarkable discoveries and inventions was the “shadow instrument,” which served to calculate the magnetic variation of a compass needle from true north and also made it possible to determine latitude from the observation of the sun’s height at any time of the day, not just at noon as was the usual practice. His *Tratado* also contains the first description of the loxodromic curve, a definition of the nature of the rhumb line, and instructions on how to sail a “great circle” course, which laid the foundation for the development of the nautical chart in common use today.

- Pedro Nunes. *Tratado da sphaera*. Lisbon, 1537.

Declination Tables and the Determination of Latitude

The further a ship sailed from the coast, the more important it became to determine its position. In the absence of land, celestial bodies such as the sun and moon were the only points of reference. The use of the astrolabe, cross-staff, or quadrant for determining latitude by the sun was predicated on the existence of tables showing the degree of the sun’s declination (angle) for the day of the observation. The latitude of a ship was the angle of altitude of the sun, plus or minus the angle of declination of the sun. This work by the Spanish-Jewish astronomer Abraham Zacuto, royal astronomer to the court of King João II (1481-1495) and King Manuel (1495-1521), gives tables for the years 1473 through 1544, and was the source of all the earliest nautical declination tables. Zacuto worked out, in theory, readings of latitude based on the elevation of the sun, figures that were tested by his pupil, José Vizinho, in his voyage along the coast of Africa in 1485. Zacuto’s *Almanach* circulated in manuscript after about 1473, and was first printed (in Hebrew) in 1496.

- Abraham ben Samuel Zacuto. *Almanach perpetuum exactissime nuper emendatum*. Venice, 1502.

The Art of Navigation

This work has been considered the classic textbook on the art of navigation written in the Portuguese language. It marks the culmination of a series of works that, beginning with manuscript nautical guides, were written with successive elaborations and improvements. The first part of Pimentel’s book deals with the mathematical

principles of navigation. The engraved plates (the one shown here has a moveable part demonstrating the passage of the North Star) demonstrate the methods of calculating angles in celestial observation. In the southern hemisphere, however, the invisibility of the Pole Star made latitude particularly hard to reckon at night. In fact, one of the many serious errors made by Vasco da Gama was his misreading of latitude on the outward voyage. As a result, he encountered the African coast well to the north of his intended landfall instead of clearing the Cape of Good Hope at the first attempt.

- Luis Serrão Pimentel. *Arte de navegar*. Lisbon, 1681.

A Model Navigation Manual

Faleiro was a Portuguese scholar who lived in Spain and wrote in Castilian. His *Tratado* is notable as a model for subsequent navigation manuals. Faleiro defined navigational terms, provided navigation instructions and procedures, and reduced to diagrammatic form difficult concepts such as the effect of magnetic variation on a ship's compass. He set the pattern for Pedro de Medina's Spanish masterpiece, *Arte de navegar* (1545), which became a standard English textbook after it was translated and published in London in 1581.

- Francisco Faleiro. *Tratado del esphera y del arte del marear*. Seville, 1535.

Coasts and Ports Described

The work shown here is primarily a roteiro, describing the coasts and ports of the Portuguese seaborne empire, opened here to sailing directions for the Guinea coast of Africa. This copy of the book was formerly the property of a house of Augustinian missionaries, a reminder of the broad reach of these early-modern works on oceanic navigation.

- Manuel de Figueiredo. *Hidrographia, exame de pilotos*. Lisbon, 1625.

III. Rounding the Cape: New Horizons, East and West

In the history of exploration, no change has been so conspicuous as the sudden extension — within a single generation after 1492 — of the range of European navigation to encompass the entire girth of the globe. The avenue of access to remoter oceans was the South Atlantic wind system. Until it was explored, the Indian and Pacific Oceans could not be approached by ships from Europe. In the earliest recorded voyages to South America, beginning with Columbus's third ocean crossing in 1498, ships struggled through the Doldrums or used the north-east trades before working their way down the coast. The discovery of the sub-equatorial wind system was made by Bartolomeu Dias in 1487, when he met the South Atlantic westerlies that took him around the Cape of Good Hope. This encouraged successors to make ever wider sweeps into the South Atlantic. The results included the huge arc described by Vasco da Gama on his way to the Indian Ocean in 1497 and the Portuguese landfall in Brazil by Cabral in 1500.

Vasco da Gama Reaches the Indies

Dias's major navigational triumph was accomplished by pioneering a new route which involved leaving the African coast, sailing out into the Atlantic and travelling southwards until hitting the westerlies. In 1497-98, a decade after Dias, a Portuguese fleet under the command of Vasco da Gama adopted the same navigational strategy, reaching Natal (now Durban) in southern Africa on Christmas Day. The objective of Da Gama's voyage was Calicut, the major pepper-exporting port where, according to Ibn Battuta, "gather merchants of the world from all four quarters." Pepper probably accounted for more than seventy percent of the world spice trade and was initially the only spice the Portuguese were concerned with. Vasco da Gama, however, lacked the diplomatic gifts necessary for success at Calicut, offending the Zamorin by his mean presents and surly behavior. Here he demonstrated his deficiencies as an observer as well, mistaking Hindus for Christians and reporting home accordingly. In consequence,

Portuguese strategy at the start of the new century was based on misleading expectations that they would be able to forge a local alliance.

- Joseph François Lafiteau. *Histoire des découvertes et conquêtes des Portugais dans le Nouveau Monde*. Paris, 1733-34.

Da Gama in Africa

Surprisingly, no first-hand account of Vasco da Gama's initial voyage was published, and until 1838 only the versions of chroniclers and historians were available in print. This early eighteenth-century Dutch engraving combines many episodes associated in such works with Da Gama's voyage down the west coast of southern Africa to the Cape in November, 1497—the sighting of whales (the attempt to catch one is an instance of artistic license), craggy landscapes, rock-pools teeming with fish, logging and watering expeditions, natives clad only in penis-sheaths, and the attack provoked by Fernão Velhoso's attempt to visit native homes.

- Pieter Van der Aa. *Naaukeurige versameling der gedenk-waardigste zee en land-reysen*. Leiden, 1707. Vol. 2.

Official Report of Portugal in the East

Just as the discovery of America was announced to Europe by the newsletters of Columbus and Vespucci, this same type of ephemeral literature heralded the Portuguese conquests in the Orient. The first official report of Portugal's activities in southern Asia is this Latin oration delivered to Pope Julius II by Diogo Pacheco, King Manuel's Vatican representative.

- Diogo Pacheco. *Obedientia potentissimi Emanuelis Lusitaniae regis per Dieghum Pacettum oratorem ad Julius II, Pont. Max. Rome, 1505*.

German Report on the Portuguese in Brazil

Even though Brazil was in the shadow of the Portuguese East India trade for most of the sixteenth century, news about lands in the West was eagerly received elsewhere in Europe. This is one of the earliest printed sources about Brazil, a version of a letter written by the Madeira-based agent of the Fuggers, a German trading company with connections throughout the European world. He notes the arrival of a Portuguese ship from Brazil, which was loaded with Indian slaves and brazil-wood, the red dye-

wood that gave the country its name. He also tells of a voyage made by two Portuguese ships down the Brazilian coast to Rio de la Plata in 1514 that seemed to confirm the existence of the passage that Ferdinand Magellan would eventually use for his circumnavigation in 1519-1521. As for trade, the agent is very optimistic—the natives “have no iron mines. In exchange for an axe or hatchet or knife they give whatever they have.”

- Copia der newen Zeytung auss Presillg landt. Nuremberg, ca. 1514.

Manuel the Fortunate

The reign of King Manuel (1495-1521) “the Fortunate” is considered the Golden Age of Portugal. In his era the “Carreira da India,” the sea-route to and from India, was established and immediately yielded enormous profits. Interested in other aspects of Portugal’s broadening eastern horizon as well, King Manuel instructed his captains: “where you come upon something new, send it to me.” Pedro Mariz, the author of this volume, was chief curator at the University Library of Coimbra and the son of the printer Antonio de Mariz. This work on the history of Spain and Portugal was the first to publish engraved portraits of all the Portuguese kings since Dom Afonso Henrique.

- Pedro de Mariz. *Dialogos de varia historia ... com os Retratos de todos os Reys de Portugal*. Coimbra, 1594.

Pope Alexander Divides the World

Conflicts between Spain and Portugal concerning sovereignty over islands and lands in the Atlantic had started early in the fifteenth century, and in the Treaty of Alcáçovas (1479), a first attempt had been made to divide the spheres of influence. After Columbus’s discoveries in the west had again ignited the controversy, Pope Alexander VI issued his famous bull *Inter Caetera* in which he proposed a line 100 leagues west of the Azores and Cape Verde as the demarcation line between Portuguese and Spanish activity. The arrangement was not satisfactory and in June, 1494, the two parties agreed in the Treaty of Tordesillas (this time, without consulting the Pope) to move the line 270 leagues further west. Both the Bull and the Treaty, however, omitted stating an exact starting line from where the 100 or 370 leagues would be counted,

so further conflict was guaranteed. Eventually the bare facts of conquest would provide the basis for Spain and Portugal's sovereignty over their respective territories. The first printed version of the Bull, *Inter Caetera*, made in northern Spain in 1511, is shown here.

- Pope Alexander VI (1491-1503). *Copia dela bulas dela concessão*. Logroño, ca. 1511.

An Expanded World

Johann Ruysch's world map erased forever the old Ptolemaic outline of the east, with its closed Indian Ocean, and it is the first printed map to show many parts of Asia in light of the Portuguese discoveries—new names appear on the east and west coasts of the Indian peninsula, and Madagascar and Ceylon are properly reduced and located more correctly than on earlier maps. Ruysch also notes the presence of the Portuguese in Labrador and Brazil.

- Johann Ruysch. *Universalior cogniti orbis tabula ex recentibus confecta observationibus*. Rome, 1507.

António Pereira, Portuguese Mariner and Chartmaker

Several chroniclers refer to an António Pereira who was in the Far East from 1534 to 1537. In 1541 he commanded one of the ships in Estevão da Gama's Red Sea fleet and returned to Portugal in 1542. If that is the same António Pereira who made this map, he must have gotten his information about the course and nature of the Amazon River from the Spanish conquistador and explorer Francisco de Orellana, who stayed in Lisbon for a while in 1542 after his return from South America. This very early depiction of the Amazon was probably drawn sometime in 1543. The other half of the map is lost.

- Antonio Pereira. [Map of the Western Hemisphere]. Manuscript, ca. 1543.

IV. Cosmopolitan Empire

Vespucci Accompanies Coelho to Brazil

Portuguese exploration made extensive use of foreign talent, while other empires, especially that of Spain, in turn exploited Portuguese savoir-faire. Amerigo Vespucci's fame as the Italian namesake of America has overshadowed the fact that two of his documented three voyages to the New World were in Portuguese service. Vespucci was a notary's son with good social connections. As agent of the Medici bank in Florence, he was sent to Seville where he became a friend and business associate of Christopher Columbus. His first voyage to America was with the Spaniard, Alonso de Ojeda, in 1499-1500. His next two voyages, however, in 1501-1502 and in 1503, were with Gonçalo Coelho, whose goal was to locate a passage through the South American landmass. After returning to Lisbon in 1502, Vespucci sent a letter to his former employer in Florence describing how the Portuguese ships had sailed south along the coast of Brazil for two hundred miles before turning east and returning home.

A New World

Somehow Vespucci's manuscript letter made its way to Paris where it was printed in 1503. Extremely popular, the "letter" saw printed editions in many languages. By 1504, in recognition that South America was much more extensive than earlier explorers had realized, the title had become *Mundus Novus*, or "New World," and enjoyed an even more popular reception than had Columbus's announcement ten years earlier. Vespucci's work was also the first to describe in print the Southern Cross, which brought to public attention the problem of navigation out of sight of the Pole Star—indeed, he claimed to be the first to address this issue, which had so complicated Vasco da Gama's endeavors. No Portuguese editions celebrated Vespucci's Portuguese voyages.

- Amerigo Vespucci. *Albericus vespucius laurentio petri francesci de medicis Salutem, pluriman dicit.* [Paris, 1503.] Amerigo Vespucci. *Mundus Novus.* [Venice, 1504].

Hans Staden Explores for Portugal

Hans Staden was a German mercenary in Portuguese service. In 1554 he was captured by the Tupinamba Indians in Brazil and kept prisoner for nine months, constantly threatened with death. (Staden is the bearded figure gesticulating in the center foreground) Nevertheless, he managed to describe what he saw in a surprisingly matter-of-fact style. Unlike many other observers, Staden avoided generalizations and often inquired about the origins of customs and traditions. But there are also chapters on cannibalistic rituals, illustrated with many woodcuts, and the title reveals something about the impression it must have made on readers: “True History and Description of a Land of Savage, Naked, Vicious, Man-Eating People, Located in the New World America.”

- Hans Staden. *Warhaftige Historia und beschreibung einer landtschafft der wilden nacketen grimmigen Menschenfresser Leuthen in der Newenwelt America gelegen.* Marburg, 1557.

Staden Elaborated

Staden’s story was picked up later by the German publisher Theodor de Bry, whose illustrated series popularly called the “Grands” and “Petits Voyages” circulated widely throughout Europe. Staden became a German hero, his role in Portuguese service largely forgotten. Here, Staden is the bearded figure at the center in the background.

- Theodor de Bry. *Grands Voyages*, Part 3 (Latin). Frankfurt, 1592

The Portuguese Gentleman of Elvas accompanies De Soto

Despite the conflicts over territorial sovereignty in the New World between Spain and Portugal, many expeditions to the Americas employed men from both countries. The story of Hernando de Soto’s expedition to what is now the southeastern United States is told here by an anonymous gentleman from Elvas in the Alentejo who was among several Portuguese accompanying De Soto. In May of 1539 the men landed in Florida, and for nearly four years searched fruitlessly for gold, wandering through what is today Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Louisiana. When De Soto died in 1542, his body was buried in the Mississippi and the rest of the group returned to Mexico. The Gentleman of Elvas was the first to describe these events.

- Fidalgo Delvas. *Relaçam verdadeira dos trabalhos que ho governador do Fernâdo de Souto y certos fidalgos portugueses passarom.* Evora, 1557.

Estevão Gomes

The exploration of the east coast of what is now the United States is popularly associated with Verrazano, but Estevão Gomes, a Portuguese pilot in Spanish service, also played a part. A former shipmate of Magellan's, he sailed from Corunna in October, 1524, and searched for a passage to the orient from Nova Scotia to Florida, against the current, in the opposite direction from that taken by Verrazzano. His observations had an immediate impact on cartography, reflected in the map shown here, which, like others in the tradition he began, shows a broad North America, unlike Verrazzano's narrow isthmus. A series of further services to the Castilian crown ended when he died in a skirmish on the River Paraguay in 1535.

- Giacomo Gastaldi. *Universale*. [Venice, 1546].

Ferdinand Magellan Circles the World for Spain

After the death of his parents, Ferdinand Magellan became a page at the Portuguese court, where he received his education. He served Portugal in East Africa and the Indian Ocean for some ten years, until injuries and King Manuel's refusal to grant his request for an increase in wages induced him to seek service elsewhere. Magellan moved to Spain, where he was successful in attracting royal patronage, being appointed head of a Spanish fleet to explore a westward route to the Indies—the Moluccas being the ultimate prize of the spice trade, the source of high-grade nutmeg and cloves. Magellan set sail in the spring of 1519 and in November, 1520, after a series of disasters and near-disasters, the remains of his fleet emerged from the strait that now bears his name to confront a Pacific Ocean considerably wider than expected. After a ninety-day voyage of hardship, Guam was reached in March 1521, the first documented crossing of the Pacific. Magellan himself was killed in a regional conflict in April and the Victoria, the sole surviving ship, limped back to Europe, thus completing the first circumnavigation. The cargo of cloves was deemed to have justified the voyage. This is the first printed notice of Magellan's circumnavigation.

- Maximilianus, Transylvanus. *De Moluccis insulis*. Cologne, 1523.

Magellan's Accomplishment Acknowledged

Battista Agnese's map of the world is part of an atlas that was commissioned by Holy Roman Emperor Charles I as a sixteenth birthday gift for his son, who was to rule Spain as Philip II. The track of Magellan's circumnavigation for Spain is picked out in black ink (the route of the plate fleet between Spain and the New world is in gold).

- Battista Agnese. [Map of the World.] [Venice, 1543-1545.] Manuscript.

V. The Portuguese Seaborne Empire

From Brazil to west Africa and eastward as far as Nagasaki in Japan and the Spice Islands of the Moluccas, the Portuguese established a presence with their enclaves, forts, and fortified trading posts. With few exceptions, all were on the sea or with easy access to the sea. In the early seventeenth century, Frei Vicente do Salvador noted with considerable justification that the Portuguese in Brazil were like crabs, so closely did they keep to the shoreline. Roads were little more than tracks and, be it in Brazil, Africa, or Asia, trade and communications were by water whenever possible. In short, the seas were the unifying spaces of what has been called the “Portuguese seaborne empire” by the distinguished historian Charles Boxer. But the Portuguese encountered seas of very different natures in the eastern and western parts of their realm. When Portugal arrived on the scene, the East India trade in gold, gems and spices was controlled by a sophisticated and well-developed network of indigenous traders. While the Portuguese operation in the Indian Ocean made a great deal of difference to the emerging Atlantic world, bringing that primitive arena of exchange into touch with the world’s richest commerce, it had relatively little impact on the states and trades of Asia, most of which continued to grow, undisturbed. Generally, the Portuguese fitted peacefully into existing frameworks and created only local and temporary disruptions. Brazil, on the other hand, was a completely different world—no established long-range trading networks or maritime trade, and resources that had to be identified before they could produce wealth. In fact, Brazil was of interest at first chiefly as a way station on the way to the Indian Ocean via the South Atlantic wind system. Landward expansion in Brazil was very limited until the re-organization of the Portuguese empire in the seventeenth century.

Africa and America: Stepping Stones Eastward

From the Portuguese discovery of Brazil in 1500 until mid-century, the newly discovered lands in the West received little attention from Portugal, whose main interests lay in the East. Contemporary writings hardly mention more about Brazil than the events surrounding Cabral’s landing on Easter day in 1500 and the few

facts that his companion Pero Vaz de Caminha reported about the newly-discovered lands in his letter to the King. The Portuguese voyages to the North—to Newfoundland and Labrador—received even less notice.

The Amazons of Mwene Mutapa

Vasco da Gama's first port of call on the East Africa coast—and a major staging-post thereafter—was Sofala, its commerce based on the empire of Mwene Mutapa and its role in the gold trade. Amazons have always been popular with illustrators and self-publicists. Columbus reported them in the Caribbean, and Francisco de Orellana had heard rumors of their presence in South America along the river he named after them. The ruler of Mwene Mutapa—the great kingdom on the Zambezi that successfully resisted Portuguese attempts at conquest—genuinely seems to have had a female bodyguard. The Dutch engraver of the early eighteenth century, however, has been influenced by the classical Amazon myth, according to which the Amazons amputated their right breasts, cauterizing the wounds, to facilitate archery.

- Pieter van der Aa. *Naaukeurige versameling der gedenk-waardigste zee en land-reysen*. Leiden, 1707. Vol. 18.

East African Outposts

Aiming to link the new sea route they had found around the Cape of Good Hope with the traditional Indian Ocean sea routes to India and the Far East, the Portuguese established coastal staging posts along the east coast of Africa at Sofala (the area around the mouth of the Zambezi River), Kilwa, Mozambique, Malindi, and Mombasa. For safety, sailings home from Goa had to be launched in late December or early January, but commercial and bureaucratic delays frequently postponed departures, and ships found themselves exposed to the fury of spring storms by the time they reached Natal (Durban). Overloading the excessively large and top-heavy ships exacerbated these dangers and the shores of Natal probably claimed over 100 ships in the first century of navigation in the area. One by-product of these disasters was the overland exploration of the east African coast from Natal to Sofala.

The Wrecks of the Santo Alberto and the São Bento

This account of the wreck of the Santo Alberto was written especially for the benefit of future castaways, and is based upon the pilot's journal and interviews with the survivors. The ship went down (its pumps clogged by the cargo of pepper, if the moralizing account is to be believed) south of Natal in March, 1593. The crew trekked about five hundred miles to Lourenço Marques, where they were rescued in June of that same year. The route of the surviving crew of the São Bento was similar to that of the Santo Alberto. The São Bento was wrecked in April, 1554, and the survivors were rescued in November, 1554.

- Bernardo Gomes de Brito. *Historia tragico-maritima*. Lisbon, 1735-1736. Vols. 1 and 2.

Brazil and the North, Very Briefly Noted

Damião de Gois was one of the outstanding Portuguese intellectual figures of the sixteenth century. A diplomat in Flanders, Poland, and Denmark, he was widely traveled and a personal friend of Erasmus, Luther, and Melanchthon. Eventually, however, he ran afoul of the Inquisition, fell under its ban, and died in obscurity. The present copy of his chronicle of the reign of King Manuel I bears the signature of the inquisitorial censor Emanuel da Vega. Gois polishes off Brazil, and the Labrador and Newfoundland fisheries, with a one-page chapter each.

- Damião de Gois (1502-1574). *Chronica do felicissimo rei dom Emanuel*. Lisbon, 1566.

Dialogue between King Manuel and a Bilingual Parrot

This remarkable pageant, The Tragicomedy of the Discovery and Conquest of the Orient, was written by António de Sousa, a teacher of rhetoric in the Jesuit College of São Antón in Goa. Here, João Sardinha Mimoso provides a detailed account of its performance by students of the College in 1617. Included in the pageant is a section in which a ship captain announces news of the discovery of Brazil while accompanied by Tapuia and Aimore Indians, parrots, and monkeys—all of whom break into a Chorus brasilius in Portuguese and Tupi. This is followed by a dialogue between King Manuel, who speaks Portuguese, and a parrot who speaks alternately in Portuguese and Tupi.

- João Sardinha Mimoso, S. J. *Relacion de la Real Tragicomedia*. Lisbon, 1620.

First Portuguese Work on Brazil

This is the first Portuguese work about Brazil. In his preface Gandavo explains that the Portuguese did not care very much about Brazil at that time because their attention was concentrated on the East India trade. In his view, foreigners were attempting to establish colonies in Brazil in defiance of Portugal because they were better informed about the wealth of the new lands than the Portuguese. In a style that has been described as the “language of an immigration agent,” Gandavo set out to praise and glorify the country and its resources. This book is extremely rare, and it has been concluded that it was suppressed after publication because of the information it contained on the colony’s riches.

- Pedro de Magalhães Gandavo. *Historia da provincia sancta Cruz a que vulgarmente chamamos Brazil*. Lisbon, 1576.

Maggiolo Takes Note of Portugal's American Claims

Vesconte Maggiolo's chart of the world is an early notice of Portugal's American claims, but his geography can be a challenge to the modern eye. Maggiolo perceived the northern part of North America as connected to Europe and, possibly, to Asia as well, but he chose not to speculate on the nature of the geographical relationship between the lands encountered by Europeans in what we know as North and South America. The left-hand side of his map picks out the New World discoveries as they were understood by the cartographer in 1511. Starting at the bottom left and moving upwards, the outline of the Atlantic coast of Brazil (note Cabral's Brazilian landfall, “cabo de stā croce de Rey de portugale”) leads into the West Indies in the upper left corner. In the north, just to the left of top center, Maggiolo points out the landfalls of the Corte-Reals (“Terra de cortereale de rey de portugalle”) in Labrador and Newfoundland.

- Vesconte Maggiolo. [Map of the World]. Naples, 1511.

The Indies Richly Valued

In 1498 Vasco da Gama entered the Indian Ocean by a route never, so far as is known, sailed before. Under local guidance he crossed it by a route known for centuries. By timing voyages to take advantage of the regularity of the region's

monsoonal wind system, navigators in the Indian Ocean could be confident of a fair wind on both outward and return voyages, and the northern and central sailing routes had long before been determined by the monsoons and by the distribution of trading civilizations from east Africa to the East Indies. But Portuguese dependence on these established Arab routes eventually had a restrictive effect on their trade, for this committed them to a port-to-port passage along the coast of East Africa that was time-consuming and exposed their ships to danger in the stormy monsoon season. Although the Portuguese found Mauritius and the Mascarene Islands in the early sixteenth century, which would have provided way-stations for a shorter, more southerly route, the discovery was not followed up. That was left for the Dutch to accomplish in the seventeenth century as they successfully challenged Portugal's control in the Indies.

Security

Portugal made every effort to protect her eastern interests with tight security, even though the Crown's constant requirement for foreign capital resulted in numerous leaks of information. There were, however, no official or unofficial reports of national activities published inside Portugal in the first half of the sixteenth century, and not until her monopoly on the spice trade began to weaken did Portuguese chroniclers make use of available archival records to celebrate national accomplishments in print. From the earliest years of their hold on the Eastern Spiceries, the Portuguese had available extensive documentation on all parts of Asia. Aside from the data gleaned in the course of administration of empire, there were several substantial narratives that explored Asian geography and native social practices. These works, however, were guarded as close secrets and were not published in Lisbon during the sixteenth century.

Almeida's African Campaigns Unsung in Portugal

This piece relates to the campaigns of Francisco de Almeida (whose victories were identified with the fall of Babylon predicted in the Apocalypse) along the coasts of East Africa and Malabar, part of the larger Portuguese attempt to wrest control of the Indies trade from their indigenous competitors. Its publication history is typical

of the way in which information about Portuguese activity was distributed throughout Europe. First published in Latin in Rome in 1506, another Latin edition appeared in Cologne in 1507, and Latin and German editions were brought out in Nuremberg in 1507. There was no Portuguese edition.

- *Gesta proxime per Portugalenses in India, Ethiopia, & aliis orientalibus terris.* Nuremberg, 1507.

Tomé Pires Published in Venice

Tomé Pires, an apothecary of the Portuguese royal household, arrived in the Indies in September of 1511, probably to advise on the purchase and shipping of medicinal drugs. A year later he wrote to his brother that he was “more rich than you can imagine.” In 1513 he made a voyage to Java as an overseer of a cargo of cloves and took the opportunity to assemble information about the island. From there he went to Malacca and the South China Sea, and in 1516 was appointed envoy to China. Pires’s account of the East was written in Malacca and India in 1512-1515 but remained in manuscript until it was published by Ramusio in Italy forty years later. According to Ramusio, he was forced to excise all that dealt with the Moluccas and spices: “And I, having ordered the book to be transcribed with great difficulty at that time in Lisbon, could only obtain one copy, and an imperfect one at that.”

- *Giovanni Battista Ramusio. Delle navigationi et viaggi.* Venice, 1550-1553. Vol. 1.

The Struggle for Goa

In 1510 the viceroy Afonso de Albuquerque risked Portugal’s future in India on a desperate and unsuccessful defense of Goa against Ismail Adil Shah, whose triumphant entry into the fortress in May is depicted in this early eighteenth-century Dutch engraving. His triumph did not last long, however, for the Portuguese had prepared a dispiriting spectacle. When he “ beheld in the courtyard all the principal Moors of the land decapitated, he became very sorrowful.” Six months later, Albuquerque recovered Goa by a characteristically bold stroke—a surprise attack followed by a campaign of terror to intimidate the surviving citizens into submission. The use of terror was in part a psychological strategy to cope with fear and insecurity as the

Portuguese faced a Herculean task against apparently impossible odds. In part, it was a way of making up for deficiencies in men and resources.

- Pieter van der Aa. *Naaukeurige versameling der gedenk-waardigste zee en land-reysen*. Leiden, 1707. Vol. 5.

Hospitality in Cannanore

Johann Albrecht von Mandelslo was a gentleman deputed to accompany the Duke of Holstein's embassy to Persia in 1638, a journey he undertook on condition that he be allowed to remain in Asia and travel further. Mandelslo travelled in a world from which Portuguese imperialism was vanishing, but memories of Portuguese prowess (which were then passing into legend) were still very much alive. In Cannanore, on the east coast of India, for example, he picked up a story of the indigenous warrior-aristocracy who, when the Portuguese arrived, tried to enforce on the newcomers their traditional claim to deference from passers-by. The ensuing duel was won by the champion nominated by the Portuguese, who exacted deference from their defeated adversaries ever after. The plate shows the custom of sexual hospitality traditionally extended, according to Mandelslo, to members of an unmarried warrior class.

- Johann Albrecht von Mandelslo. *Voyages celebres & remarquables faits de Perse aux Indes Orientales*. Amsterdam, 1728. Vol. 1.

Albuquerque "the Great"

The period of Afonso de Albuquerque's viceroyalty, from 1509 to 1515, was exceptional. He was a restless, passionate imperialist, whose strategy was all aggression and whose tactics were all audacity. He would never delay an attack unnecessarily, except for St. James's day. He created a string of Portuguese sovereign colonies on the edges of hostile land-masses at Goa, Melaka, and Ormuz and launched a crusade that he dreamed of leading to Mecca. Ultimately, however, Albuquerque's policy of seizing trade by force was uneconomical. He accumulated enemies at court because he was obliged to operate without time to deliberate or scope to compromise, and he died disgraced, "wronged by men for what I have done for the king, and by the

king for what I have done for men.” He saw himself as a new Constantine, and even experienced a battlefield vision of the cross. His son, however, thought of him as another, greater Caesar and named this compilation of writings after Caesar’s Commentaries.

- Alfonso de Albuquerque. *Commentarios do grande Afonso Dalboquerque*. Lisbon, 1576.

A “Portuguese Couple” from Macao

This Japanese ethnographic work depicts a man and a woman from each of the forty-two “barbarian countries” (including China) outside of Japan. Most of the representations are purely fanciful and are probably derived from Chinese sources.

- Nishikawa Joken. *Yonjuni-koku Jinbutsu Zusetsu*. Kyoto, 1720.

“Golden Goa”

The Portuguese Estado da India survived in the sixteenth century because indigenous traders and states in the Indian Ocean could tolerate it and profit from it. In the seventeenth century, however, European competition almost destroyed it. This era was prefigured by the intelligence-gathering activities of Jan van Linschoten, whose account of his travels in the orient inspired Dutch incursions from 1599 onwards. The engraver of this scene is said to have worked from Linschoten’s own sketches. The market-place in Goa displays well observed and representative details of colonial life: the native wet-nurse and water-carriers in the foreground, the indigenous notable mounted on a horse urged forward by the rattle of a tambourine, the concubine for sale, the disputing merchants, the money-changers, the heavily shrouded palanquin and that characteristic Portuguese institution, the alms-house, on the extreme left.

- Theodor DeBry. *Petits Voyages*, Part II (German). Frankfurt, 1598.

Gujarat

After the union of the Castilian and Portuguese crowns in 1580, the Portuguese record in exploration became a subject of dynastic pride in Spain. The 1615 Madrid edition of Barros’s *Decadas da Asia* was among the results. The plate shows a map of Gujarat, with Portuguese shipping in the Gulf of Cambay. This was an area of immense

commercial and strategic interest and the center of a maritime civilization from antiquity. The trading center of the region was Diu, gateway to northern India, which was founded by the former Russian slave, Malik Ayaz. The Portuguese destroyed the Gujarati fleet in 1509, and Malik made the best terms he could, opening Diu to the victors and withdrawing his own clients from the pepper trade, in which the Portuguese intended to specialize. After 1534, when Diu became a Portuguese stronghold, the time of Malik Ayaz was recalled as a golden age of resistance to the Christians. In reality, it was nothing of the sort—just a typical story of a well-contrived balance by local interests who absorbed the newcomers without conceding power to them.

- João de Barros. *Quarta Decada da Asia*. Seville, 1615.

Cannanore

On his first voyage, Vasco da Gama had so thoroughly alienated the Zamorin of Calicut that he did not dare return there. On his second visit to India in 1502, he therefore made for Cannanore, where the ruler received him in the style depicted in this early eighteenth-century Dutch engraving of the scene as it was described by Barros (though the artist omits the cuspidor borne, according to the text, for the royal expectorations of betel-juice). The canopy, the fans, the four thousand attendants are all in the text; the frisky elephant is not. Without the goodwill of the ruler of an existing entrepot, the Portuguese goal of a major share of the pepper trade would have been impossible in the face of opposition from Calicut and from the Muslim and Jain merchants who traditionally handled the trade.

- Pieter van der Aa. *Naaukeurige versameling der gedenk-waardigste zee en land-reysen*. Leiden, 1707. Vol. 3.

Guns and Sails

“One of the greatest victories ever in that part of the world,” in the estimation of a sixteenth-century chronicler, was won off the Malabar coast on 18 March, 1506, by a Portuguese squadron of nine ships against the fleet of the Zamorin of Calicut, allegedly 250-sail strong. The Portuguese tactics were essentially evasive, and even when the Muslim fleet was scattered, the victors hesitated to close and grapple. But in the face of the wind the enemy “could not put the missiles they carried to good

use, nor the flame-throwing equipment they carried for the moment prior to boarding, and the only damage they could do us was with their artillery, the greater part of which was cast in iron and of small impact compared with ours." This victory established a pattern which was already discernible and which has remained unexplained to this day—European naval superiority enabled expeditions to operate successfully, far from home, against victims better endowed in every other kind of resource.

- Pieter van der Aa. *Naaukeurige versameling der gedenk-waardigste zee en land-reysen*. Leiden, 1707. Vol. 4.

The Portuguese Sinbad

Fernão Mendes Pinto, "the Portuguese Sinbad," claimed to have sailed the east from 1521 to 1558 as a soldier of fortune, penetrating every cranny of the accessible orient, surviving more shipwrecks, enslavements, slaughters, storms, and changes of fortune than any reader could reasonably believe. His account of his adventures is a masterpiece of picaresque literature with many delicious asides, both sententious and satirical. Though his description of China is no more verifiable than the rest of his book, it fairly describes the country's image with his contemporaries, ringing true as the relation of an eye-witness, walking around the markets of Peking "as if in a daze" at the quantities of "silk, lace, canvas, clothes of cotton and linen, marten and musk and ermine, delicate porcelain, gold- and silver-plate, seed-pearls and pearls, gold-dust and gold bullion." As for base metals, gems, ivory, spices, condiments and foods, "well, these things were to be had in such abundance that I feel as if there were not enough words in the dictionary to name them all."

- Fernão Mendes Pinto. *Peregrinaçam*. Lisbon, 1614.

The Dutch Challenge the Portuguese in the East

In 1583, Linschoten travelled from Lisbon to Goa, and for six years he lived (though apparently a Protestant) as a dependent of the Portuguese Archbishop. Although he never went far from Goa, he acquired detailed information about places as far afield as the Spice Islands and China, while his insight enabled him to realize the growing weakness of Portugal's power. After his return to Holland, Linschoten devoted his

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time to persuading his countrymen to send expeditions to the East. His *Itinerario* was translated into English, German, Latin, and French and became the navigator's main guide for Eastern seas. The map of the East Indies shown here was drawn from Portuguese maps of the area and covers in great detail the eastern world known to Spain and Portugal, and to no other western countries, at the close of the sixteenth century.

- Jan Huyghen van Linschoten. *Itinerario*. Amsterdam, 1596.

Celebrating the Achievement

João de Barros, often called the "Portuguese Livy," began his career of literature as a boy. After service in West Africa, he entered the India House in Lisbon in 1528 where he served for forty years in a position that gave him access to all the archives connected with Portugal's discoveries and conquests. In about 1540, he set to work chronicling the story of Lusitanian overseas empire. His *Decadas*, published in 1552 (with further editions in 1553, 1563, and 1615), record Portuguese voyages and empire-building in the Far East, but Barros also reports in detail on the early years of Portuguese exploration of the West African coast. Distinguished both historically and stylistically, Barros's *Asia* follows Portuguese activity from 1420 through 1538.

- João de Barros (1496-1570). *Asia de Joam de Barros*. Lisbon, 1552.

The Lusiads

The *Lusiads* is to Portuguese poetry what Barros's *Asia* is to Portuguese prose. The voyage of Vasco da Gama occasioned its composition and was the idea around which it grew. Camões's celebration of Portuguese navigators, discoverers, and explorers combines elements of the classical epics of Homer and Virgil with those of Christian sermons and folk ballads, and has inspired generations of Portuguese. Unlike Barros, Camões's secure place in the hall of fame of national Portuguese heroes came only after he had died in extreme poverty, his body thrown into a pauper's mass grave.

- Luis de Camões. *Os Lusiadas*. Lisbon, 1572.

